

# EARLY INTERVENTION EDITION

## *The Newsletter of the School-Based Early Intervention Unit* *Winter 2009*



*The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families* [www.kids.delaware.gov](http://www.kids.delaware.gov)

### **Our New Cabinet Secretary** *by Belvie Herbert-Perry*

The Early Intervention Program would like to welcome Vivian L. Rapposelli to her new post as Cabinet Secretary of the Delaware Children's Department.

A staunch advocate for the underprivileged, Secretary Rapposelli has dedicated her career to serving Delaware's children including those in the foster care system and victims of domestic violence.



**Vivian L. Rapposelli**

In addition, she volunteers as a legal advocate representing the interests of neglected children.

Secretary Rapposelli believes early intervention has a lot to do with education and outreach. In particular, that school-based early intervention serves to strengthen and broaden support systems in the community. "I think that school-based programs have a profound impact on our children's future and I am pleased that we were able to expand the K-3 program to reach kids up to the fifth grade" she stated. Secretary Rapposelli's vision for Delaware's children is to find innovative ways to achieve goals that may have been out of reach by building on our relationships with collaborative partners. She is committed to providing the direction necessary to keep, protect and serve Delaware's children. We look forward to working with you!

### **News Flash From Our Schools** *by Jaclyn Watts*



This past October, students at Richey Elementary School participated in "Let's Make A Difference Week." For one week, the children collected items to donate to the "Holiday Stocking for Soldiers Program." This program has many area volunteers who make the personalized stockings and secure community assistance. Community volunteers donate goods as well as assist in filling the stockings.

The students and staff at Richey were able to donate five boxes filled with "goodies" for the soldiers. Some of the items donated were tissues, hand and foot warmers, playing cards, socks, game books, toiletries, lip balms, disposable cameras, chips, trail mix, candy and gum. The stockings were stuffed with a total of 35,000 pounds of "goodies!"

With the assistance of over 500 volunteers, "Stockings for Soldiers" successfully sent 5,400 homemade stockings overseas this year! The students and staff at Richey Elementary School were thrilled to participate in this very successful and meaningful program!

### **Message from the Manager**

*Joyce D. Hawkins*



A review of the year 2008 indicates a job well done by the staff of the School-Based Early Intervention Unit. We have kept our focus on the needs of the children and families that we serve. The staff's level of creativity rose to meet the needs of children and families during these hard economic times and we must now double our efforts on behalf of children and families in 2009. In all that we do we must "Think of the Child First."

## The H.O.P.E. Project

by Deborah Ritter



A team of Sussex County Family Crisis Therapists applied for and won an Alternative Activities Grant sponsored by the Office of Prevention and Early Intervention. The grant enabled us to engage students in many exciting pro-social activities during the summer months. This year our summer program theme was “Having Opportunities Present Every Day” or H.O.P.E. The students were taught that learning takes place everywhere, not just in the classroom. They were encouraged to log something new that they learned on each field trip as well as what they learned at home between trips. The parents were urged to get involved by encouraging their children to observe, ask questions and think about what it is they can learn from every day activities at home. By the end of the summer, composition books were filled with passages that made us laugh, cry and scratch our heads in amusement.

Our initial field trip was to the Pizza King Restaurant where the children were briefed on our expectations for the summer. We also used this opportunity to work with the students on table manners, ordering, nutrition and social skills.

Some of the other field trips included the Lewes Historical Society where students were transported back into time as they walked through homes that have been preserved for 200-300 years; Trap Pond where students learned about creatures that lived in and around the pond; The Governor Ross Mansion and Plantation where

students explored a complete Victorian Italianate mansion and learned what life was like before the Civil War; Knollac Farms where students learned about the care of the miniature horses; the Zwaanendael Museum where students learned about pirates and the first settlers of this seaport town; Cape Henlopen State Park where students were taught about small water animals; and a ceramics studio where students selected a piece, painted it and waited patiently for each layer of paint to dry. Our final field trip took us to Jungle Jim’s Water Park in Rehoboth Beach. However, students had to earn this trip by following all of the rules throughout the summer. For most students this was a first time experience and they were in awe of the sights and activities there. This trip served as a reminder to the students that all of their effort and hard work was not in vein.

The H.O.P.E. Project was able to provide nine field trips including meals to seventeen children during the summer months. We are confident that the memories and lessons they learned will last a lifetime and we look forward to next summer!

## Family Crisis Therapists Attend the Delmarva Low Income Summit

by Joy D’Souza and Amber Johnson



On October 15, 2008, Pepco Holdings Inc. held their annual low income energy assistance summit. The summit focused on the increasing need for energy, continuing increases

in energy and how inflation continues to outpace federal funding.

Participants were provided with useful information in various workshops on fuel conservation for low-income families.

The speakers included Glenn Moore, Vice President of Delmarva Power (New Castle Region), Dover Mayor-Carleton Cary, Congressman Mike Castle, and Charles Dickerson—Vice President of Customer Care.

Summit participants received information on how to heat homes using energy saving tips, community resource links and free vendor information. The Summit also included various workshops such as “LIHEAP-The State Funded Low Income Fuel Program, and “Reducing Risk for Low Income Populations-Fire Safety.” Each workshop facilitated discussion on the benefits of energy conservation, budgeting and home safety. Some of the energy saving tips included: insulating windows and doors, decreasing the temperature on your thermostat by 2 degrees (each degree shaves off 2% of your bill), and replacing traditional light bulbs with energy-star quality compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). Some of the fire safety tips included: use of new space heaters that meet the latest safety standards, placing them in open areas on a hard, level surface and at least 3 feet from flammable materials, ensure that a smoke detector is on each level of your home, test batteries every 3-6 months, create a fire emergency exit plan with your family and finally practice the plan!

Everyone who attended agreed that the Summit provided information that was pertinent to the families that we serve and eagerly shared this information with colleagues.

**Dorangely Johnson**, school-based Family Crisis Therapist at Blades Elementary School in Seaford, attended Herbert H. Lehman College in New York City. She began her social work career as a case manager for the homeless. This is where her quest to promote change by providing



individuals with dignity respect and self determination began. In 2001, Mrs. Johnson accepted a position as a rehabilitative specialist for the Center for Urban Community Services. There she assisted the homeless obtain and maintain housing. In 2005, Mrs. Johnson and her family moved to Delaware and she began her career as a state worker with the Division of Family Services as a treatment worker. Shortly thereafter she moved

to the investigation unit. Seeking an opportunity to work with children in a different capacity, Mrs. Johnson accepted the position of Family Crisis Therapist in December 2008. Her goal is to provide all children with the opportunity for academic and social success despite their life's circumstances.

Mrs. Johnson is happily married and has three teenage sons.

**Michael A. Jackson Jr.**, school-based Family Crisis Therapist at Warner Elementary School joined the Early Intervention Team in November 2008. Mr. Jackson graduated from Mansfield University with a BS degree in Business Administration. He was previously employed at the Devereux Foundation in Devon, PA.



As a Residential Counseling Supervisor at Devereux, Mr. Jackson supervised a staff of twenty employees. He also worked part-time as a behavior interventionist at the Mapleton Middle School in Malvern, PA. Prior to that, Mr. Jackson was a Therapeutic Counseling Specialist, with the Elwyn Institute.

Mr. Jackson is currently attending Wilmington University and will earn a Masters Degree in Elementary

and Secondary School Counseling.

He and his wife Dawn Jackson, Family Crisis Therapist at Brandywood Elementary School have two children, Michael III and Kierstyn.

Mr. Jackson believes that the children of today are our most precious resource and hopes to make a difference in as many young lives as possible.

## Distinguished Principal

*by Cynthia Jones*

**Susan Donahue**, Principal at Morris Early Childhood Center in the Milford School District, is an accomplished educator who has dedicated her life and career to improving the educational opportunities offered to Delaware's youth.

Mrs. Donahue graduated from the University of Delaware with a degree in Communication and was employed by a real estate agency for several years before she pursued her teaching certification. Once she received her certification, she began teaching at Richardson Park Elementary School, then moving on to Wilmington Friends School. In 1992, Mrs. Donahue began teaching 3rd grade at Lulu Ross and remained there for 13 years. The following three years were spent at Ross as an Assistant Principal. In 2007, Mrs. Donahue came to Morris as Principal. When asked about her future, Mrs. Donahue stated that she sees herself remaining as a building administrator because she likes the daily contact with the students.

Mrs. Donahue's guiding philosophy is "focus on what is best for the child." She fully supports the Early Intervention Program, as she feels that teachers should be allowed to teach and that identified professionals should handle the social and emotional needs of the students and their families. Mrs. Donahue is pleased to have such a valuable resource as her Family Crisis Therapist and appreciates all of the assistance that she has given to the students and families at Morris.

Mrs. Donahue lives in the beach area with her husband who is a Principal in the Cape Henlopen School District. She is currently an Adjunct Professor at Wilmington University teaching Educational Psychology and Assessment. She is also pursuing her doctorate in Education and is nearing completion of her dissertation.





Congratulations to the following members of the Early Intervention Unit:

Erik Hochrein for 15 years of state service

Rosalyn Allen Echols for 15 years of state service

Nicole Mosley for 10 years of state service

Ivy Stephens for 10 years of state service

Lori Johnson for 10 years of state service

Heather Pombo-Pietuska for 10 years of state service

Jennifer Lorenzana for 5 years of state service

Darrell Jones for 5 years of state service

These awards were announced at the 2008 DMSS employee recognition celebration.

### **Out of the Mouths of Babes**

*by Mary Ann Edgison and Lori Pritchett*



The Senator Spirit News is a newsletter written by the fourth grade students at Fairview Elementary School with Mary Ann Edgison as their advisor. The students involved are “junior journalists” and have expressed an interest in writing, photography and interviewing. The newsletter features interviews with their peers and some essays. The following is an excerpt from an essay entitled “If I

Were President of the United States” written by fourth grader Ketarah Hardwick:

If I were president of the United States I would lower taxes. If I lowered taxes I would help everyone have a better income and spend more money. Also I would lower gas prices. I would lower the cost of gas to help everybody put more gas in their

tank. Also, they would be able to travel more around the world. I would see that everyone could afford healthcare, even poor people. People would have better healthcare. I would lower the cost of food so people could live healthy and not have to go to the doctor or hospital as much. If I were President and could fix one thing in America I would fix healthcare first. The second most important thing is bringing the soldiers home and making peace with other countries. Last, but not least, I would make sure schools have better supplies and computers so they can help children get more education. If I can do those things, I hope I can change the world!

### **Frankford Elementary School**

Lori Pritchett, Family Crisis Therapist at Frankford Elementary School feels lucky to be able to spend quality time with one of her caseload students. Anaya, a fifth grade student at Frankford stated the following: “Mrs. Pritchett is like my best friend and my lunch day with her is the best day of the week. I always feel happy in Mrs. Pritchett’s office!” Mrs. Pritchett uses the lunch dates to not only eat, but problem solve and bond with her students.

### **Welcome New Staff**

Monica Fisher-Carrie Downie Elementary

Irma Hernandez– Lewis Elementary

Michael Jackson– Warner Elementary

Katharine Snyder– West Seaford Elementary

Dorangely Johnson-Blades Elementary

### **Newsletter Staff:**

***Ed Burks, Belvie Herbert-Perry & Jacquelyn Saunders***

*Signed editorials are the opinion of the writer, not necessarily those of the staff or advisors. The staff reserves the right to edit for reasons of space, libelous content, offensive language, or accuracy.*